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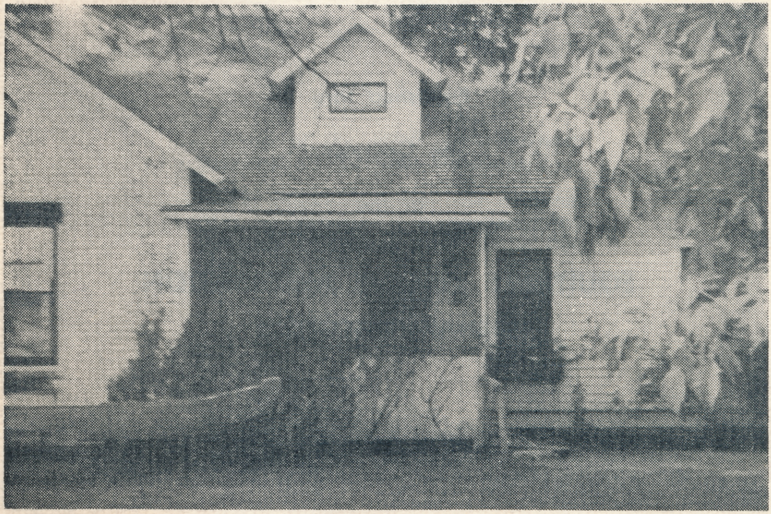
I LIVE IN A MUSEUM



My Museum Home
Keshena, Wis.

by

Mrs. Angus F. Lookaround

(Phebe Jewell Nichols)

Phebe Jewell Nichols.
(Mrs. Angus F. Lookaround.)

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NEENAH, WISCONSIN

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(Phebe Jewell Nichols)

The sun was rising in great beauty over the city of Milwaukee that April morning in 1946 when I answered the telephone to hear, "This is the desk clerk at the Veterans Hospital calling. Your husband is very low. Come at once."

My daughter's husband had heard the ring and was with me instantly. We drove hastily across the city to the hospital at Wood. The attendant and the doctor were very kind. I realized I would never know my husband in the living flesh again. The glory of the sunrise was in keen contrast to the sudden dark depths of my grief. Yet, I thought, how significant it is that this sunrise loveliness should envelope the passing of this brave man whose very life was full of the great light of love for his fellowman.

I was able to sit through the service at the chapel at Wood where the veteran chaplain, the Reverend Gustav Stearns, told us many hopeful things and said, "I am not just a minister here conducting this service; I am a mourner, too, for I knew this man well and I loved him."

I was able to look at the Masonic apron and the American flag on the casket, to watch the Masons of the Lodge at Elkhorn, Wisconsin, file past and pay their respects to this brother who had kept his membership in their Lodge for twenty-five years, to hear my daughter's voice reading a poem of mine that he loved—and finally, leaning on the arm of my soldier son, to see the Veterans of Foreign Wars performing the last rites and duties and to hear the sharp volley and taps ring out over this and thousands of other graves in the Soldiers Cemetery.

I was also given the strength to preside at the large meeting scheduled for the theater at Wood on Corregidor Day, the same week of the funeral when my organization, Wisconsin Women of the Philippine Defenders, honored the women whose loved ones had not returned from the war years in Japanese prison camps, and the words Manila, Bataan and Corregidor were like bloody battle flags laid on the heart.

Then, I could stand on the balcony of that little home of my son-in-law and daughter which had sheltered me during the long illness and look off at the Spring sunset and let the great lonely sobs come. Yet I knew this was human weakness, for my husband was not dead; he had but passed on to greater beauty and fulfillment. Only earlier that Spring I had read the emblazoned words in the eerie light of Washington's tomb, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that Believeth in me though He were Dead, yet shall He Live." I knew this was so. It comforted me now.

I must go home. It seemed best for my four-year-old grandson to accompany me. He accepted the responsibility gravely, and said as we were about to board the bus, "I will get you a good seat, Granny," (which he did), later remarking to the driver, "I am going home with my Granny. She needs me." I did need him. Oh, how I needed him! As we stepped down from the bus at my home in Keshena, my Indian friends were there to receive us, the house was warmed against the chill Spring evening, there was food ready and we were surrounded with love and kindness. As we crossed the familiar threshold, the little boy said, "Why did Grandad have to go away?" We talked that all out before we went to sleep.

Angus was only fifty-two when he died, far too young, it seemed. He was a perfectionist in all he undertook, in ordinary duties, in the music he loved, in social contacts. "Man's inhumanity to man," curtailment of opportunity, discrimination and prejudice had torn at him. And so his physical self was gone from me. Yet I knew as surely as I knew the stars were in the heavens that he had never really left me. I was to realize this more and more in the passing years. Love is eternal.

There is always some kind of future. Awhile before my husband's death I had gone to my friend W. C. McKern, director of the Milwaukee Public Museum. Realizing that Angus had been called by the doctors 'incurable,' I was anxious to let no time pass without action on my part to take up where he 'left off'—to carry on the ideas in which he believed. Mr. McKern understood me perfectly. "Mr. Lookaround was one of Wisconsin's foremost Indians," he said. He arranged for his staff to make a death mask of my husband's head and right hand, 'the hand that had directed so many Indian children in music." I was encouraged to go on with my ideas to start a museum here in our home in my husband's memory and open it to the public so that visiting white folk could learn more about the Indians' real civilization and there might be a better understanding between the races, a matter close to my husband's heart. For in the course of his career and the travels it required he had become thoroughly convinced that white people generally knew very little about the Indians' real civilization, culture, attitudes, philosophy, and ideas. When people called him Chief, he would reply, "Don't call me Chief, call me Gus."

It wasn't all easy. I had no money for the project, no financial sponsors. But as I wrote letters to my husband's old friends much generosity was shown. For example, the big tuba which he had played in the circus bands, Ringling's, Barnum and Bailey, Forepaugh and Sells and others, and the American Legion Band in France in 1927 and was now tarnished, was sent by some of his buddies to Cincinnati to be permanently lacquered. It now stands bright and gleaming beside his violin, bass fiddle bow and music rack, and the plaque of his right hand. People gave and lent things I could use. I bought a sizeable exhibit case. The excellent portrait done by our young friend Dorothy Litch was a gift to us from Walter Olen of the Clintonville Four Wheel Drive. I placed all these things in the smaller of the two living rooms which had a separate entrance from the front porch as so many of these old houses do have.

The museum was small but very impressive. A large wooden highway sign in the form of a shield and painted green with a yellow thunder-bird super-imposed upon it and carrying the words, Angus F. Lookaround Memorial. Visitors Welcome, was hung near the front gate. The Memorial opened informally on Memorial Day 1948, Wisconsin's Centennial year. Our work had started and visitors began to come.

The General Pearsal Post, Veterans of Foreign Wars of Wood of which my husband had long been a member, chartered a bus and came September 12, 1948 to formally dedicate the Memorial Museum and Studio. The day, close as possible to my husband's birthdate, the 9th., was fair and lovely. The Veterans raised the flags on the lawn, Old Glory and the Union Jack for the Navy. Their Commander hung the dedicatory plaque on the wall. There were speeches, one by a long time friend, James G. Frechette, the Menominees' leader. The Menominee Indian band which Angus had long

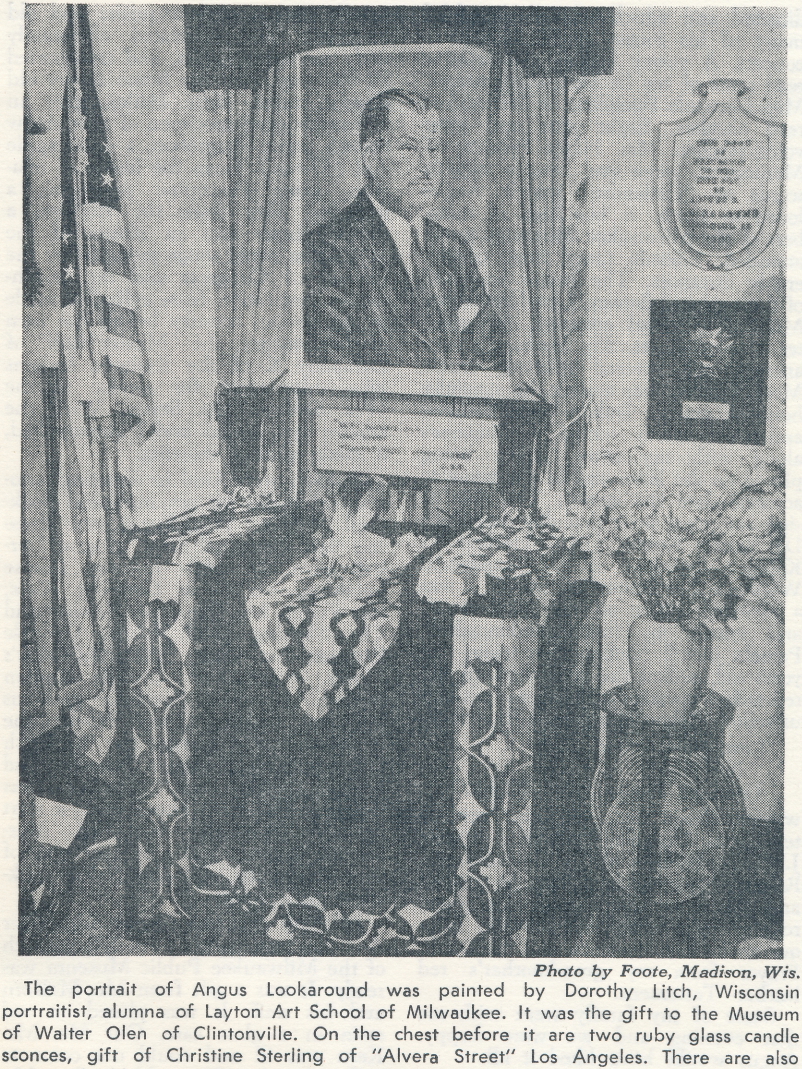


Photo by Foote, Madison, Wis.

The portrait of Angus Lookaround was painted by Dorothy Litch, Wisconsin portraitist, alumna of Layton Art School of Milwaukee. It was the gift to the Museum of Walter Olen of Clintonville. On the chest before it are two ruby glass candle sconces, gift of Christine Sterling of "Alvera Street" Los Angeles. There are also pieces of ribbon applique done by Mr. Lookaround's mother. The feather headdress was made for Mrs. Lookaround by her husband, the three eagle feathers for her two sons and her husband who served their country in World Wars I and II. Underneath all is a woolen chief's shawl, very old, with bands of ribbon applique.

directed and which was composed of many of his former pupils, played a concert. A young Indian girl relative read some of my In Memoriam poems. Miss Gertrude Puelicher of Milwaukee read another. Eight girls and their voice teacher, Mrs. Harry Pehrson of Manitowoc, came and sang a capella words to "Finlandia" which Angus loved so much. A bus load of members of the Milwaukee Museums group attended. Friends came from considerable distances. The house was full of their gifts of flowers. Lloyd Andrews, Menominee tribal attorney, was master of ceremonies. My husband's very ancient and revered relative, Uncle Mose Tucker, was among the specially honored guests. Indian men ushered and their wives served as hostesses along with my sister, chairs being placed on the lawn and in the house to accommodate the crowd. The first to sign our guest book that day was Ruth De Young Kohler (Mrs. Herbert V. Kohler) chairman of the Centennial Women's Committee of which I was a member. After all the good words and music, my first granddaughter, Pamela Jewell Nichols, not quite two years old, pulled the gold cords of the red taffeta curtains and the portrait was unveiled. Below it gleamed the words

"Love Faileth Not
Nor Light
Through Time's Swift Flight."

written long ago by my revered teacher at Carleton College, Margaret J. Evans. Because of his advanced age, Reverend Stearns could not be present and I had to carry on in his place, reading the Twenty-third Psalm from our ancient family Bible and the Lord's Prayer from my grandmother's red leather Testament.

Some of my family were with me that evening and we were happy. Angus would have liked it all.

The Museum Grows

Gifts began to arrive. Katharine Green of "Bonnie Oaks," Portage, Wisconsin gave a very exquisite and old birchbark box decorated elaborately with porcupine quills, and transported all the way from her home a very old dugout canoe. Belle Dailey gave an unusually good specimen of deer sinew thread; Joyce Fitzgibbon, a dried apple doll (Kiowa). From the hands of relatives came Peacepipe pipestone, a muledeer skin from the Rockies, a record player and an album of the old Indian ritual songs prepared by the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian Institution from cylinders made in the Indian country before the turn of the century, the "Muster Roll" of Company K of the Keshena Indians who volunteered for service in the War between the States. With the articles that Angus and I already had, it made quite a showing.

Authors were kind in donating autographed books for our memorial bookshelf. Walter Havighurst sent three and Sam Campbell three. August Derleth gave his *Bright Journey;* Louise Leighton, her *Great Carrying Place;* Iola Fuller, her *The Loon Feather* and *The Shining Trail;* Elaine Goodale Eastman her *Pratt, The Red Man's Moses,* (Story of Carlisle Indian School). Gertrude Puelicher gave us Shannon Garst's *Crazy Horse;* the University of Chicago sent us Ruth Underhill's *Red Man's America* and Martin, Quimby and Collier's *Indians Before Columbus*. These were a start for our Memorial Bookshelf. Marguerite Zellmer gave us two sets of colored pictures showing Indian folkways. So it went.

In 1949 near the former September date, the bust made by Adolph Seebach of the Milwaukee Public Museum was ready. It was a gift from Mr. McKern and his staff. It was placed on red satin in a glass case. Our Mr. McKern was ill and could not come to make the unveiling address, but Mr. Wright, director of the Neville Museum in Green Bay, graciously performed the courtesy for us. Milwaukee friends provided music. Two members of the Indian band unveiled the bust by lifting an Indian blanket from the case. Mr. Walter Olen gave a speech of tribute. The day was fine. The crowd was large. We had passed another milestone in our work.

Gradually the museum moved into the living room and the smaller room became a crowded sort of Victorian parlor. Visions of having to use eventually one of these folding contrivances for making a bathtub into a bed flashed through my mind. But we must expand our services as the people's interest expands.

applique. The Woodland Indian Woman's Corner shows woven reed rugs, a very old Menominee cradle board (Tah-kay-nah-gun), disposable diaper material, aboriginal talcum powder container (an oak gall or puff ball), the basswood fiber wedding bag, the leakless bark bucket, and the bark fiber used with two deer rib matting needles. There are the ancient gourd rattle wand with its intricate Caddo beadwork, the Cherokee pipe with its symbols of brotherhood, the La Crosse racquet, numerous baskets of sweetgrass and bark and willow, even cactus fiber ones with yucca handles from the southwest to keep company with the Arizona goatskin chair. Standing alone under its glass cover is the necklace of shell beads from the Tennessee river valley, 2,000 years old, a gift from anthropologist William Thatcher of Grand Rapids, Michigan. A table with birch legs and a birchbark top holds various informative items, including the large book from the Smithsonian Institution, the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, containing the Menominee history, vocabulary, family histories and the translations of Chiefs Neopit, Osh-

Menominee beaded deerskin articles.

Photo by Foote, Madison, Wis.

Over the registration desk hangs a photograph of the Wigwam Exhibit which was one of my jobs on the Women's Centennial Committee preparing for the Centennial Exposition at State Fair Park, Milwaukee. It is called "Wisconsin's First Home," and the photograph is a Christmas gift from Ruth Kohler. A large Guatemalan blanket and two Navajo blankets are displayed together with a Winnebago woman's riding dress trimmed with cowrie shells and elks teeth, a deerskin dress with silver medalions, and two chief shawls with silk ribbon kosh and other important Menominees. The tuba gleams from its corner and an answering gleam comes from the pictures of the Oshkosh family in the opposite corner. Between are the Lookaround portrait in its case of red draperies, and the dark bust in dignity on its maple pedestal, the gift of Mary Anne Dixon. The gold-fringed Old Glory stands beside the case, and a tom tom with eagle feather totem hangs beside the bust.

The Victorian parlor so dear to my heart with its Franklin stove and old family furniture and pictures was metamorphosed into a book room and place to study. After all, this is a 'studio', too. Among the books are 56 photostatic copies comprising "A Visit to the Menominees" (1849) from the magazine "The Friend" as reprinted in the Wisconsin Historical Collections. There are also photostatic copies of the Menominee Indian Treaties for Land Transfer, backed by Felix Keesing's *The Menominee Indians of Wisconsin* and *Lewis Cass and the Indian Treaties* by F. C. Comfort, and the Meriam Report of 1928 (The Problem of Indian Administration). There are, among many others, out-of-print books, *The French Regime in Wisconsin* by Louise Phelps Kellogg. And there is the day-by-day file of newspaper clippings that go into *Indians Miscellaneous, Menominee Indians Current, etc.* with a special file on the *Termination legislation for the Menominees,* with pictures of Menominee Indian leaders with President Eisenhower signing the so-called "Freedom Bill" of June 17, 1954. Trying to tell its brave story is the large map over the Treaty case where, marked out in red, is shown the original domain of the Menominees from Escanaba to Stevens Point, Eau Claire to Portage, Portage to Oshkosh, to Milwaukee, along the Lake Michigan shore including Door County to the point of starting, and the Reservation line of today covering the 300 square miles so loved, and yes, so coveted. There is also a large 1920 Reservation map showing the timber lands and lakes, rivers and streams, and cross trails, telling its own brave story; for Chief Neopit had said long ago when a timber lobby was trying to influence Congress to break the 1854 Treaty and take out valuable timber lands for them, "We will not consent to the sale of any more land. We want it for our children and grandchildren. We accepted our present Reservation when it was considered of no value by our white friends. All we ask is to be permitted to keep it as a home." Neopit, his mark. (Quoted in the Shawano County Journal of March 16, 1882.)

Significantly standing beside my inkpot is a small silk American flag, gift of a long beloved Leader of the Oshkosh Campfire Girls.

The many visitors ask many questions as they come into the Museum during the summer (It opens May 30th. and closes November 1st. annually.), and a cross-section of the talk here goes about like this:

"How did the Indians make their dyes?"

"There is the answer, in that issue (shown) of the Wisconsin Magazine of History, my article *Weavers of Grasses, Indian Women of the Woodlands.*"

"Can you help me find out about the beliefs of the Medicine Lodge?"

"Yes, in this book, the 14th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology."

"Can you tell me about the Wappingers?"

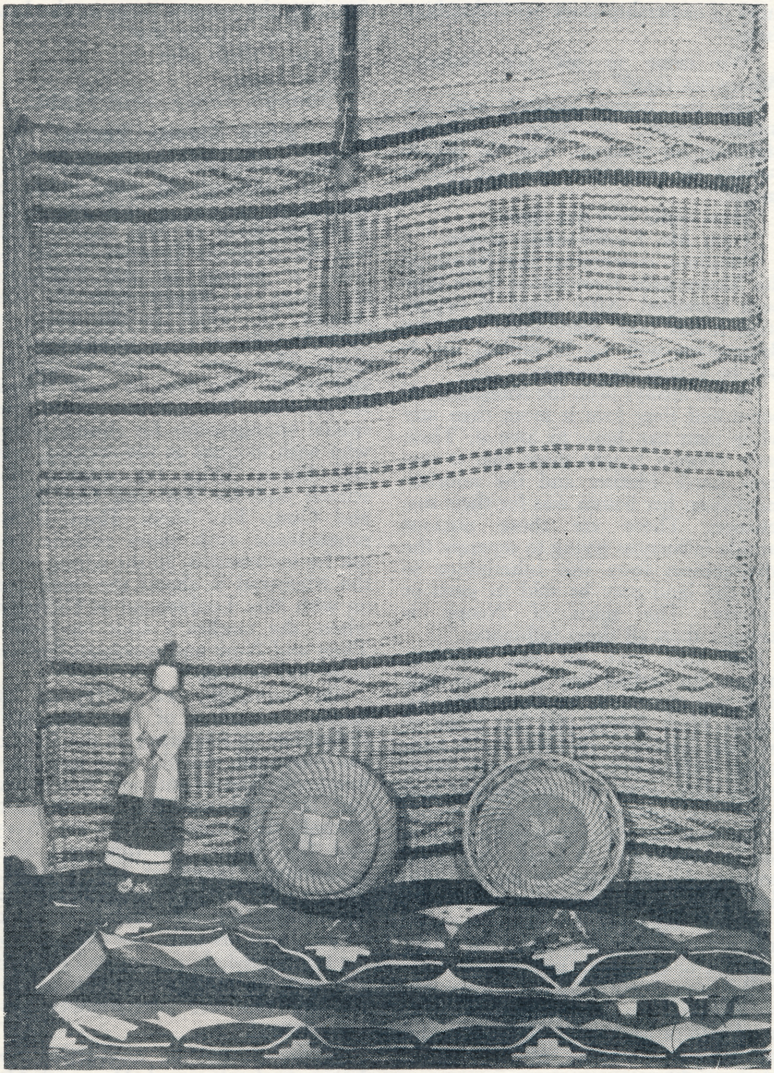
"Yes, p.p. 68-89 in *Red Man's America*. There may be descendants of these people among the Mohican Stockbridge Indians near Gresham."

"How much per acre were the Menominees paid for the lands they sold in 1854?"

"Fifteen cents an acre."

"Does the government own this land?"

"No. The Menominees claim conti-



Here are shown a corn husk doll, sweet grass trays, ribbon applique and a woven reed mat.

nuity of ownership since pre-Columbian times."

"We came to see the Indians. Where are they?"

"All the homes around here are Indian homes, the farm across the highway, for instance. And the people owning the store next door are Indian people."

"How come you live here?"

"I am Mr. Lookaround's widow."

Questions concerning the future of the Menominee Reservation have now been answered. After years of negotiation it has been determined that the Reservation will not be broken up. It will be a separate county.

"It has always been the Menominees' home and they love it more than any white man can hope to love it. Their early religion taught them that it was their Earth Mother and the nourishment from her bosom was for their sustenance. There are those noxious outside influences trying to separate the Menominees from this inheritance so that the land may be sold in parts or entirety. The spirit of Neopit is stronger than all these influences."

And that isn't all this Museum means. An Indian boy is at the door to return the book he borrowed. An Indian High School girl has come to do some historical research for a term paper. Others have just brought some stones they want me to identify and then have gone on to the back porch to see whether the Luna moth cocoon has "hatched out." A small black-eyed five-year-old girl wants to know, "Has the cocoon bloomed yet?"

As the day ends, I think the rooms are over-crowded. I'll take the twin beds out of the study bedroom. Where shall I sleep next? Oh yes, there are the canoes, the two dugouts. I can crawl into or under one of them as did the Indian portagers of old on a sleepy night.

Of course, it will not come to that. There is lumber on hand for doubling the length of the sleeping porch and finishing the rumpus room in the basement. And I know that

"Love Faileth Not
Nor Light
Through Time's Swift Flight."

After Eleven Years

The Memorial's needs have been met, and through the years it has expanded its services. A unit was added after the death of Mrs. Lookaround's son, M. Sergeant Conover B. Nichols who, a veteran of the Philippine Campaign of World War II, died August 12, 1957 as the result of wounds inflicted in a Japanese prison camp. This unit consists of pictures and books. The services now include lecture-tours for college groups and special arrangements for church groups who wish to come in the evening, craft and history helps for teachers and schools and for Boy and Girl Scouts and Camp Fire Girls. There is correspondence with those persons who ask for information. In the winter when the Memorial is closed the work goes on with Mrs. Lookaround in California where she teaches a class on *Indians Then and Now* and continues her lectures and writing.

On September 12, 1958, on the tenth anniversary of the Memorial's dedication, at a meeting on the lawn of the Memorial, the old flags were ceremoniously burned and new flags raised, one the gold star flag for Sergeant Nichols, the Union Jack for the Navy, and Old Glory. At this time Mrs. Lookaround presented the Memorial Museum to the Menominee Tribe, the gift to become effective as soon as federal controls over the Reservation are terminated. It is expected that this gift will be the nucleus for cultural pursuits that the Menominees have long desired.

So far as can be ascertained, the Angus F. Lookaround Memorial Museum is the only one of its kind, raised to an Indian in his own home on his own Reservation.

(Parts of the article were formerly published in "Creative Wisconsin")

The Museum, located near Keshena, Wis. on highway 55, is open daily and annually to visitors, May 30 to November 5.